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DOCUMENTARY

The Journal of John Tipton

Commissioner to locate Site for State Capital—1820

[John Tipton, pioneer Indian fighter, soldier, legislator and United States Senator, was a striking example of a certain type that has impressed itself upon the early history of the western country of America. It is the pioneer type—the uncultured, unlettered man, the product of a rude society, who, by strong natural gifts has come to the fore and asserted himself with distinction among the leaders of the land. Tipton, born of pioneer stock on the Tennessee frontier, came to Harrison County, Indiana, in 1807, when 21 years old, and is said to have soon taken rank as a leader of the law and order forces in his neighborhood. Along with a local military company he joined General Harrison in the campaign against the Prophet's town in 1811, and in the famous battle of Tippecanoe acquitted himself notably. That he rose by gradual promotion, after this campaign, to the office of brigadier general is evidence of his military capacity. With the admission of Indiana as a State and the creation of State and local offices he was elected sheriff of Harrison County, and served as such until 1819, when he was chosen to represent his district in the legislature; and as representative he was re-elected in 1821. When, in 1820, commissioners were appointed to select a site for the permanent capital of the State, he was considered a proper man for this important task; he was also appointed a commissioner to act with an Illinois representative in fixing the dividing line between the two States; and in 1823 President Monroe made him general agent for the Miami and Pottowattomie Indians within our borders. In 1831 he was elected by the legislature to fill out the unexpired term of U. S. Senator James Noble, and in 1833 he was re-elected for the full senatorial term. He died in Logansport, April 5, 1839, aged 53 years.

Not the least interesting of Tipton's performances are the journals left by him, which throw a light on his character, revealing his precise and methodical habit and his keen attention to practical matters. Two of these journals are of particular value. These are, the journal of the Tippecanoe campaign and the one here published. Each is the most circumstantial account in existence of the events chronicled. Of the commissioners' work in locating the capital, there is practically no other document existent, the legislative reports being exceedingly meager. The original manuscripts, once owned by John B. Dillon, were found among his effects at his death, and are now in possession of Mr. John H. Holliday, of Indianapolis. They were published by him in the *Indianapolis News*, in 1879, the one here printed in the issue of April 17, and the Tippecanoe account on May 5. Otherwise they have been inaccessible to the public. For best sketch of Tipton see W. W. Woollen's *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana*.]

THE JOURNAL.

“on wednesday the 17 of may 1820 I set out from Corydon in Company with Gov'r Jennings ‘ I had been appointed by the last

legislature one of the commissioners to select & locate a site for the permanent seat of government of the state of Ind'a (we took with us Bill a Black Buoy) haveing laid in plenty of Baker (bacon?) coffy &c and provided a tent we stopt at P Bells two hours then set out and at 7 came to Mr Winemans (?) on Blue river. stopt for the K't (night)

"thursday the 18th

"some frost set out early and set out at sunrise at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 9 stopt at Salem had breckfast paid \$1.00 B &c and Bo't some powder paper &c paid 2.12 $\frac{1}{2}$ Set out at 11 crost muscakituck paid 25 cts and stopt at Col Durhams in Vallonia who was also a Commissioner here we found Gen'l Bartholomew one of the commissioners Gen'l J. Carr & Cap't Dueson of charlestown who was going out to look at the country I cleaned out my gun after dinner we went to shooting

"Friday 19 we set out early stopt at Browntown had Breckfast paid 50 cents set out at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 9 at one stopt at Cap't J. Shields after Dinner we set (out) Cap't Shield went with us this evening crost the river at the lower rapids after traveling about 7 miles through good land encamped and stretched our tent near a pond this is the first time I have stretched or slept in a tent since 1814.

"Saturday the 20

Cap't Shields left us and returned home we set out before sunrise and at 45 p 6 came to John Reddick who lives on S 19 T 8 N of R 6 W* fine land fed paid 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ set out at 8 at 5 p 12 came to the upper Rappids of Drift at the plaice where we made Bark Cannoes to carry a wounded man down to vallonia on the 20th of June 1813 Stopt let our horses graze set out at 1 and 15 p 3 came to John Berry† who lives on S 5 T 10 N of R 5 E good land good water and timber

*Obviously a mistake. Range 6 *east* is meant.

†John Berry, whose cabin stood at the mouth of Sugar Creek, in Johnson County, is deserving of notice as the man who cut a "trace" into the heart of the wilderness which was the route of ingress for many of the first settlers of Indianapolis and contiguous territory. Berry's Trace, as it was called, began at Napoleon, Ripley County, ran north-westward to Flat Rock and Blue River, thence northward beyond Berry's house, it would seem, for we are told of its crossing the "Whetzel Trace" near the site of Greenwood. Nineveh Berry, a well-known citizen of Anderson, was a son of John Berry, and for him, it is said, Nineveh Creek, in Johnson County was named. See Nowland's *Early Reminiscences*, pp. 13, 14.

"Sunday 21 set out at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 4 at 5 passed a corner of S 36 T 11 N of R 4 E passed a place where Bartholomew and myself had encamped in June 1813 missed our way traveled east then turned Back at 8 stopt on a muddy Branch Boiled our coffee set out at 9 at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 9 I killed a deer the first I have killed since 1814 at 10 came on the trace at creek found tree where I had wrote my name and dated the 19th June 1813 we traveled fast and at 7 encamped on a small creek having traveled about 45 miles

Monday, 22d

"a fine clear morning we set out at sunrise at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 6 crost fall creek at a ripple stopt to B (bathe?) shave put on clean Clothes &c this creek runs for between 30 & forty miles parallel with White river and about 6 or 8 miles from it in this creek we saw plenty of fine fish set out at 9 and passed a corner of S 32 & 33 in T 17 N of R 4 E at 15 p 11 came to the lower Delaware Town* crost the river went up the n w side and at one came to the house of William Conner† the place appointed for the meeting of the commissioners he lives on a Prairie of about 250 acres of the White R Bottom a number of Indian Huts near his house on our arrival we found G Hunt of Wayne County John Conner of Fayette Stephen Ludlow of Dearborn John Gilliland of Switzerland & Thos Emmerson (Emerson) of Knox waiting for us Wm Prince and F Rapp not being up we waited until late in the evening We then met and were sworn according to law and adjourned until tomorrow evening

"Tuesday 23d went to shooting after B (breakfast?) we met appointed a committee to Draft rule and adjourned until 12 met at 12 F Rapp appeared and was sworn We appointed G Hunt chairman and B J Blythe clerk and adjourned until tomorrow to meet at the mouth of Fall creek Bartholomew Durham Con (Conner?) Dueson and myself * * I paid \$1.87 $\frac{1}{2}$ & \$1.00 for mockesons set out stopt at the lower town for the Kt

"Wednesday the 24th a dark morning at 9 Gov'r Jennings with the other comrs came on us set out for the mouth of fall

*See article in this number on Indian towns in Marion County.

†William Conner was an Indian trader who established himself on White River some four miles south of the site of Noblesville early in the century. He was a brother of John Conner, one of the commissioners, who was the founder of Connersville. These brothers, particularly William, were of great service to the government in its dealings with the Indians of this region, and they merit fuller biographies than have ever been written of them.

creek the town we are now in is high Dry rich Bottoms very large one of the most beautiful on the river but Timber scarce we crost the river $\frac{1}{2}$ mile below to the S E side * * this Town after traveling some distance along the Traice that led to the mouth of fall creek Bartholomew myself and some * * turned off at 20 p 11 to see the river at 12 came on the river at 1 stopt on a bluff near 200 feet high the air cool and pleasant here we took Dinner and set out at 45 p 1 at 15 p 2 crost fall creek then rode through a very rich piece of land the large timber all Dead we are told it was killed some years since by worms* the under growth at this time mostly prickly ash and very thick which makes it very difficult for us to ride through at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 3 got to McCormicks who lives on the river quarter of a mile below the mouth of fall creek† Last Kt I staid in an Indian Town saw some Drunk Indians this morning eat at the Table of a Frenchman who has long lived with the Indians and lives like them he furnished his table for us with eggs &c altered times since 1813 when I was last here hunting the Indians with whom we now eat drink and sleep they have now sold their land for a trifle and prepareing to leave the country where they have laid their fathers and relatives, in which we are now hunting a site for the seat of Govrt of our State The Bank of the river on which McCormick lives is from 25 to 30 feet above the water at this time the country Back is high Dry and good soil but the timber is scarce Govr Jennings Bartholomew Durham Con and myself went down the river 1 mile to camp

"Thursday 25

"at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 2 Bartholomew Durham & myself went fishing caught plenty of fine large fish returned the morning cloudy some rain

*This total destruction of early forest areas by "worms" is not without interest to the student of arboriculture. In the first days of Indianapolis some 200 acres within the donation known as the "caterpillar deadening" was cleared of brush, fenced in and tilled as a common field. See Holloway's *Indianapolis*, p. 9. From Tipton's location at the time of making his note this deadening was probably the one he saw. A little further on he speaks of another deadening, mentioning that it was of sugar trees.

†The McCormick settlement, at the mouth of Fall Creek, was one of three sites that the commissioners seem to have had in mind beforehand. According to Nowland it consisted of "four or five families, viz: Hardings, Wilson, Pogue and McCormicks, all of whom had come that spring. Albert Wilson, a son of John Wilson, has told the editor that his father, in company with the McCormicks and George Pogue, came from Connersville, following an Indian trail that led from the Whitewater to a White River ford at the mouth of Fall Creek. These settlers, as well as those at the "Bluffs" were, of course, "squatters," as the country had not yet been opened for settlement.

Bartholomew and me went out to look at the land the comrs came down we set out for the Bluffs Distance Down the river about 15 miles the Govr started (?) here at McCormicks at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 11 after traveling some distance on a small traice at 45 p 12 came to the river in a wide bottom that is inundated Staid 1 hour set out very hard rain passed very bad swamp one horse crippled some of my coleags say the times is very hard came to the traice the rain fell in Torronts at $\frac{1}{2}$ p 4 Bartholomew Durham Carr Dueson & me stopt in some Indian camps after getting fire kindled and our clothes dry we had a pleasant kt the land here high Dry and rich Immediately (?) on the River in T 14 N of R 3 E went to Rest

Friday 24

"the morning clier cool pleasant my horse with two more missing I wrote some letters home while I was riting Col D found our horses the commissioners that had went to the Bluff last kt returned B D and myself went down to see the Bluffs* they waited here for our return we found the Bluff in T 13 N of R 2 E in S 13 the Bluff is about 150 feet above the river but verry uneven the water good Genl Carr [and] Capt Dueson started home and left us out of this Bluff issues a number of fine springs one of which some distance back from the river has near 20 feet fall Back of this Bluff runs a beautiful creek they front on the river near 1 mile if they were level on top it would be the most beautiful site for a town that I ever have seen Saw the R line between R 2 & 3 E and the carries (?) of S 12 & 13 in T 13 N of R 2 E we then returned to our camp and set out to examine the n w side of the river crost in an overflowed bottom at 2 came to a plaice where the river turns to the west making a very short Bend runs hard against the w shore and seems to be a very difficult pass for boats of burthen at this plaice the growth is all young timber some remains of oald cabbins I am told there was once an Indian village here * * Wm Lander who lives 1 mile back from the river told me that an Indian said the French once lived here and that the Indian went to school to a Frenchman in this plaice but they left it about the time of

*At the bluffs of White River, in Morgan County, where Waverly now stands, was a settlement founded by Jacob Whetzel, one of the brothers famous in the annals of Indian warfare. Whetzel cut a trace from the Whitewater to this point, and was followed and joined here by several other families. See Nowland's *Early Reminiscences*; also, an article in the *Indianapolis News*, Sept. 3, 1897.

Hardin's Campaign which [was] about 33 years ago* the country continues high and good from some distance back from the river Mr Lander (?) has planted some corn here the timber very scarce here that is fit for building &c after viewing this plaice we set out and traveled up the river the land rolling at 3 crost a Branch at 4 came to a beautiful clie pond or lake about 60 yards wide seeming nearly from n to s† the water clie the Bottom gravley a plenty of fish we drank some and continued on our course at 45 p 5 crost Eagle creek‡ a beautiful creek sufficient to turn a mill at 6 our co (company?) became uneasy and at (?) we crost the river to the s e side and at 7 arrived at the mouth of Fall creek found Govr Jennings had went up to conners

"Saturday 27th

"a fine clie morning very cool before breckfast we walked out to look at the Bottom had breckfast &c Durham paid \$2.25 at 9 we crost to the n w side we crost at the mouth of Fall creek the n w side below the mouth of the creek is low and overflows above is some high land at 45 p 11 came to the river Boiled our coffy after some time spent on the n w we crost to the s e side the comrs then met and agreed to select and locate the site Township 15 north of R 3 E which Township was not divided into sections but Judge Wm B Loughlin of Brookville in whose district the Township lies having been instructed by the Surveyor General to to give every facillity in his power to the comrs in the completion of their duty we agreed and hired a man to carry a letter to his camp for which we gave him \$2.00 Bartholomew Col Durham & Jonathan Woodberry a friend of mine from Hardinsburg with whom I have just went 1 mile down the river and encamped for the Kt Some of the comrs came to our camp we had a pleasant evening

"Sunday 28 a cool clie day we met at 6 Judge Loughlin came on and stated that it would take 10 days to progress so far with the surveys as to enable us to progress with our business on motion the comrs then adjourned to meet again on next Monday week at 45 p 11 we set out for Wm Connors J Conner and G Hunt two of the comrs went home the rest to Wm Connors we

*See article on Indian towns.

†Probably the bayou locally known as Lannigan's Lake, near south line of Marion Co.

‡Note—Eagle and Fall creeks had received their names at this early date.

traveled about 3 miles and crost fall creek the land being levil and rich from the river to this plaice the most of the timber for some distance from the river having been sugar tree has been killed abt 2 years since by the worms and is now thickly set with prickly ash near the creek the timber better after we crost the creek we traveled about 8 miles between the river and creek the land equally good timber mostly Sugar Buckeye Hackberry Cherry Walnut &c every quarter section is worth twice the Govert price we crost to the n w side below the lower (Indian) town Recrost at Conners Prairie found the men playing favourite game which they call mockuson which is played with a bullit and 4 mockusons* then went to view the ground on which Bartholomew and me had incamped in June 17th 1813''

(*Concluded next number*).

Indian Towns in Marion County

THE reference in the Tipton Journal to two Indian towns on White River between Conner's trading post and the bluffs, one in existence at that time and the other a tradition, is a contribution to an uncertain subject. The existence of a Delaware town in the north part of Marion County, near where Allisonville now stands, is recognized by Ignatius Brown and Berry Sulgrove in their histories, and the former tells of an old white woman who remained there after the tribe had left. This woman had been captured when a child, had reared a half-breed family, and her forgotten story seems to have been very like that of the more famous Frances Slocum. Very little information is to be had about this town, and it is treated, rather, as a tradition at the time of the first white occupancy. Tipton's statement, however, establishes that it was there in 1820.

The town that once stood where the river crosses the south line of the county was still more a thing of vague report. Prof. Ryland T. Brown, in the *Indiana Geological Report* for 1882 (see p. 97) affirms, though without giving his authority, that it was the village of a Delaware chief named Big Fire, a friend to the whites; that it was destroyed by the Madison Rangers, in 1812, in revenge for the

*See article on the game of Moccasin, in this number.